

Message Text

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SUBJ: ELECTION MANIFESTO OF THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY

REF: COLOMBO 1601

1. SUMMARY: THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) MANIFESTO IS SEVEN YEARS, BUT IT DOES OFFER SOME IDEA OF THE DIRECTION OF A FUTURE SLFP GOVERNMENT IF PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE AND HER PARTY SHOULD BE RETURNED TO POWER NEXT MONTH. THE MANIFESTO REITERATES THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO NATIONALIZE ALL PRIVATE FOREIGN BANKS. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN INVESTMENTS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE "PERMITTED," NO MENTION IS MADE OF THE FINANCE MINISTRY'S PLAN TO OFFER GUARANTEES FOR SUCH INVESTMENT. THE ONLY OTHER MAJOR PROPOSALS FOR NATIONALIZATION INCLUDE THE IMPORT/EXPORT TRADE; GREATER EFFICIENCY IS PROMISED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ALL NATIONALIZED VENTURES. IN FOREIGN POLICY, SUCH TRADITIONAL STANDBYS AS NON-ALIGNMENT AND THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE ARE REFERRED TO. THE VAGUENESS OF THE MANIFESTO CAN BE LAID TO A PAUCITY OF NEW IDEAS AS WELL AS A DESIRE TO LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN FOR LATER COALITION ARRANGEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE HASTILY-DRAFTED SLFP ELECTION MANIFESTO (FULL TEXT POUCH TO NEA/INS) IS DEVOTED LARGELY TO A RECITAL OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT FROM 1970 TO THE PRESENT. COMING AS IT DOES SIX WEEKS AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF THE OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY'S (UNP) MANIFESTO (REFTEL), IT INCORPORATES THE SLFP'S RESPONSE TO THAT DOCUMENT. THE SLFP PARROTS THE UNP PROPOSALS FOR A MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS,

FOR STEPS TOWARD WORKERS' OWNERSHIP OF INDUSTRY, AND FOR THE PROMULGATION OF A MORAL CODE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND "PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES." LIKE THE UNP MANIFESTO, THE SLFP CALLS FOR INCREASED AUTONOMY IN A REORGANIZED UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SLFP TAKES EXCEPTION TO THE UNP TRADE UNION POLICY. ATTACKING THE OPPOSITION'S PROPOSAL FOR NON-POLITICAL LABOR UNIONS, THE SLFP "VEHEMENTLY OPPOSES THE SUBTLE MANEUVERING ON THE PART OF THE UNP TO ESTABLISH FASCIST GROUPS UNDER THE GUISE OF TRADE UNIONS.

3. THERE IS THE EXPECTED PLEDGE IN THE MANIFESTO FOR THE NATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN PRIVATE BANKS, A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL MADE BY THE SLFP GOVERNMENT BUT NEVER CARRIED THROUGH BECAUSE OF PROROGATION AND EARLY DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY. THE GOVERNMENT'S OTHER PRE-DISSOLUTION LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, THE TAKEOVER OF TEMPLE-OWNED LANDS, IF NOT REFERRED TO IN THE MANIFESTO.

4. ONE OF FINANCE MINISTER FELIX DIAS BANDARANAIKE'S PERSONAL INTERESTS - THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PRIVATE FOREIGN INVESTMENTS - IS SLIGHTED. FOREIGN INVESTMENT WILL BE "PERMITTED", BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT IT WILL BE ACTIVELY SOUGHT. (EVEN SO, THE PARTY WAS CAREFUL TO COVER ITSELF WITH THE LEFTISTS BY CITING THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE SOVIET UNION AND VIETNAM.) INVESTMENT IS PERMITTED "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES LAID DOWN IN THE (GOVERNMENT'S) 1972 WHITE PAPER" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT NO MENTION IS MADE OF THE DRAFT BILL TO GUARANTEE FOREIGN INVESTMENT THAT WAS FIRST PROMISED IN THE 1975 BUDGET SPEECH.

5. IN COMPARISON WITH THE UNITED FRONT MANIFESTO OF 1970, RELATIVELY LITTLE EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON FURTHER NATIONALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY. BESIDES THE BANKS, THE IMPORT/EXPORT TRADE IS TO BE PROGRESSIVELY TAKEN OVER, BUT NO OTHER SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY ARE MENTIONED FOR SUCH TREATMENT. IN FACT, THE CREATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR INDUSTRIES GEARED TO NATIONAL NEEDS IS TO BE ENCOURAGED. IN RECOGNITION OF THE ABOMINABLE PERFORMANCE OF STATE VENTURES IN SRI LANKA, THE SLFP HAS PROMISED TO INSURE THAT NATIONALIZED CORPORATIONS ARE RUN WITH GREATER EFFICIENCY.

6. OTHER DOMESTIC INITIATIVES INCLUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL DEFENSE ACADEMY, THE DIVERSION OF THE KELANI RIVER NEAR COLOMBO TO PROVIDE IRRIGATION FOR THE NORTHWEST PROVINCE, THE PROVISION OF 350,000 NEW JOBS THROUGH PLANTATION AREA DEVELOPMENT, AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF CONSUMER COOPERATIVES. NOTABLY ABSENT IN THE SLFP MANIFESTO IS ANY SUBSTANTIVE REFERENCE TO THE TAMIL AND MOSLEM MINORITIES AND THEIR PROBLEMS. THE ONLY SUCH MENTION IS A PROMISE TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL ETHNIC

GROUPS TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON MINORITY-RELATED QUESTIONS. QBWEVER, THE P.M. HAS ADDRESSED THE TAMIL QUESTION MORE SPECIFICALLY ON PUBLIC PLATFORMS IN TAMIL ELECTORATES.

7. THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS PLANKS OF THE SLFP MANIFESTO ARE EVEN MORE DEVOTED THAN THE REST OF THE DOCUMENT TO A RECITAL OF THE DEEDS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT AND THE SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT OF ALL BILATERAL DISPUTES WITH INDIA ARE CITED AS THE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS. THE SLFP MANIFESTO POINTS OUT THAT "OUR PROPOSAL TO DECLARE THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE HAS NOW RECEIVED UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE." THE MANIFESTO GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY WILL BE BASED ON THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DECLARATIONS ADOPTED AT THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT. IN A REFERENCE TO THE UNP'S PRESUMED UNLIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCEPTABILITY IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, THE SLFP MANIFESTO EMPHASIZES THAT "NO OTHER POLITICAL PARTY IN SRI LANKA HAS THE DESIRE, THE CAPACITY, THE CONFIDENCE OR THE INTERNATIONAL TRUST WHICH IS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THESE PROGRAMS TO REPRESENT THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

8. COMMENT: LITTLE CAN REALISTICALLY BE EXPECTED FROM ANY POLITICAL PARTY PLATFORM; ACCORDINGLY, NEITHER THE UNP NOR THE SLFP HAS OFFERED MUCH. THE SLFP, AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF SOME CONSIDERABLE LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS, APPEARS TO HAVE RUN OUT OF IDEAS. AND WITHOUT ITS LEFTIST PARTNERS OF 1970, IT SEEMS SOMEWHAT DISINCLINED TO PROPOSE BOLD NEW SOCIALIST INITIATIVES. PERHAPS, ALSO, IT IS AVOIDING SPECIFICS IN ANTICIPATION OF A POSSIBLE POST-ELECTION ALLIANCE WITH THOSE SAME LEFTIST PARTIES, OR EVEN THE TAMILS, AND THE CONSEQUENT NECESSITY TO DRAFT A COMPATIBLE "COMMON PROGRAM."
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